

When Social Science Concepts Become Neutral Arbiters of Social Conflict: Reading the Ethiopian Federal Elections of 2005 through the Ethiopian Student Movement of the 1960s and 1970s

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ABSTRACT

This article traces the story of how the intellectual culture and discourses that animated the Ethiopian student movement in the 1960s and 1970s have continued to impact political processes in the country in the generations since. More specifically, it looks at how the legacy of the Ethiopian student movement influenced events during the country's momentous 2005 elections. The essay further poses the question of how one can characterize and understand the influence of the social sciences on actual social forces in a particular historical context.



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Section 1. Rethinking the Legacy of the Ethiopian Student Movement

This article began as an attempt to make sense of the blogs, newspaper articles, and academic accounts of the 2005 federal elections in Ethiopia.¹ I wanted to know why contemporary descriptions of the incumbent regime focused on the technicalities associated with the election process at the expense of discussing more substantive issues. I found this particularly striking given that each competing political party offered widely different electoral platforms on what constituted the democratic process in the first place. Moreover, each party had a different perspective on how democratic processes were linked to substantive issues such as land privatization, capitals controls, and ethnic self-determination. Therefore as I began my research, I had to ask why these substantive issues were relegated to the background in most accounts of the elections. I also wanted to know if these issues had been discussed in an Ethiopian context prior to the elections, and if so, whether those who had raised these substantive issues in the past were partially responsible for the way in which the 2005 elections came to be characterized both locally and internationally.

Given that both academic and popular descriptions of the 2005 Ethiopian elections continued to rely on a certain set of bifurcated metaphors, such as “greed and grievance,” “patron and client,” “rapacious rule vs. innocent population,” and so forth, I also wanted to revisit the questions that Tobias Hagmann first posed in his criticism of Jon Abbink’s assessment of the 2005 elections. To paraphrase Hagmann, can modern political parties such as the incumbent Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and its founding party, the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF), which fought a long civil war in order to institutionalize revolutionary democracy, be characterized as parties that simply “represent a ‘personalized’ and ‘traditionalist’ form of domination . . . ?” Can contemporary Ethiopian history be reduced to notions in which politics is seen as part of a long tradition of authoritarian culture vs. democracy?²

Intuitively, it seemed to me that the best way to consider the fore-history of the 2005 elections was first to read through the manifestos of each competing political party, and second to investigate the journals, brochures, and pamphlets that were produced by the Ethiopian student movement in the period leading up to the Ethiopian revolution of 1974.⁴

What I found while reading through this latter material was that we could draw connections between the policy choices of contemporary political parties and the animating ideas of the Ethiopian student movement (ESM). For example, the questions of “land to the tiller” and of “self-determination of nationalities” continued to be two of the key debates that dominated the 2005 elections. However, what I did not expect and what was truly surprising was that there was a continuity of persons from the student movement up to and including the 2005 elections in terms of the major players who were shaping policy debates.

It seemed clear that many of the splits, openings, and fractures that divided the Ethiopian student movement not only shaped national policy during the period of the Derg regime and the civil wars of the 1970s and 1980s but also continued to shape the content of the debates during the 2005 elections. At the time of my initial research, I discovered that there was a startling dearth of secondary sources on the Ethiopian student movement, a gap that has only recently begun to be filled.⁵ Indeed, nearly every Ethiopian who has written directly about the ESM was a participant in the movement and in some way or other is seeking to explain the role they played in its activities. This means that much of the literature on the student movement is concerned with personal redemption. On the other hand, the more formal scholarly literature that examines the roots of the Ethiopian revolution does not take the debates of the ESM seriously.⁶ Instead, most academics tend to frame the causes of revolutionary change in Ethiopia in military terms or as a conflict between modernity and tradition.⁷ What this means is that the outcomes of the revolution are hardly ever analyzed in terms of the longer social, political, or economic trajectories that have framed Ethiopian, African, or even global history. Moreover, the student movement has barely been analyzed in terms of policy impacts in the post-Cold War period.

If, as both Gebru Tareke and the EPRDF/TPLF contend, the student movement constitutes the fore-history of both the Derg regime and the incumbent EPRDF, then what is striking about the debates that circulated on opposition websites and blogs around the 2005 elections is the absence of concern with the historical context that the present regime aimed to address, particularly the legacy of the 1974 Ethiopian revolution, the student movement (which produced many of the ideas of the revolution), and the concomitant civil wars.⁸ Also missing from the discussion were the

achievements and contradictions of the incumbent EPRDF in relation to this broader historical context.

As Sarah Vaughn has observed in her work on nationalism in Ethiopia, within the Ethiopian student movement a tradition was started whereby “the historians desire to explain that ‘it was so’ melds with the politician’s keenness to demonstrate that ‘it could not have been otherwise.’”⁹ As such, a kind of synergy exists within Ethiopian social science and political arenas, which, to this day, allows public figures to flip flop between a primordial assertion of identity and an utter rejection of this primordialism by claiming that all previous knowledge has been produced through an instrumental framework, but as such all facts are manipulated narratives. This then allows for both the social sciences and social movements to be re-launched based on a positivist commitment that things must become so.¹⁰

In the essay “Battling with the Past,” Alessandro Triulzi also examines the intellectual, social, and political processes through which historiographical trends originating in Western scientific institutions have come to dominate the writing of the Ethiopian past. In his essay, Triulzi attempts to capture the consequences of using the disciplinary tools of “modern history” to frame historical narratives about Ethiopia. Importantly, Triulzi observes that the first wave of modern historical studies about Ethiopia coincided with the growth of nationalist conviction and the intensification of state-building projects within Africa and Ethiopia. Methodologically, this meant that twentieth-century histories of Ethiopia often followed a pattern that combined a reading of European archival documents with a reading of documents from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Ethiopian royal chronicles, and Ethiopian land grants (often recorded by the church). Given that the Ethiopian documents were usually written in Ge’ez or Amharic, the centrality and exceptionalism of Ethiopia’s literary traditions were foregrounded. Moreover, since Ethiopian literacy itself was associated with the Abyssinian highland culture of church and plow, it was almost inevitable that modern historical studies of Ethiopia extolled the centralizing power of the Abyssinian state, while marginalizing the stories of the nonhighland, nonliterate, and noncultivating groups that exist within the current boundaries of Ethiopia.

Triulzi also points out that many of the historians associated with the initial establishment of this state-centered historiographical style were trained at the School of African and Oriental Studies (SOAS) under the

auspices of Roland Oliver, one of the foremost figures to shape twentieth-century African studies. Indeed, many of the first Ethiopian scholars to write in the style of modern academic history, who later staffed the History Department at Haile Selassie I University College (now the University of Addis Ababa), were also trained under Roland Oliver. This includes such well-known persons as Tadesse Tamrat, who in 1972 published *Church and State in Ethiopia*; Merid Wolde Aregay, who, throughout the 1970s and 1980s, wrote extensively about medieval Christian Ethiopia; Bahru Zewde, who has made significant contributions to our understanding of twentieth-century Ethiopian history; and Mohammed Hassan, who was one of the first persons to write a “professional” history of the Oromos—a numerically large but socially marginalized ethnic group in Ethiopia. Triulzi also remarks that Hassan’s book, entitled *The Oromo of Ethiopia: A History 1570–1860*, is often understood as having started a new trend toward examining the history of non-Abyssinian Ethiopians. However, Triulzi counters that it was in fact the literature produced by the Ethiopian student movement that marks the first major break from Abyssinian state-centered histories, even while that literature employed the tools and methods of modern historical studies. Astutely, Triulzi observes:

The student movement readily acknowledged the inequalities between the different regional and ethnic components of the [Ethiopian] Empire, but after a heated and divisive debate consigned the national question to revolutionary change and regional autonomy to be achieved within the reformed State of the future.¹¹

For me, what this means is that historiography and political practice have been explicitly connected since the 1970s in Ethiopia. Of course, Triulzi does not deny that all history is written from the perspective of the ethnographic present, but what he is concerned about is that, in Ethiopia, present modes of expressing ethnic or national identity are often read backward into the historical past as primordial and unchanging. This being the case, scholarly interventions in relation to any given primordial identity are often encouraged and then read as decisive actions in the contemporary political field. This, of course, can also be read back into the founding moment of modern Ethiopian studies and its association with the central state apparatus. But, if this is true, what we must also

observe is that Ethiopian historiography is meant to decide not only who the losers, winners, and heroes of the past are, but also who the losers, winners, and heroes of the future are. Historiography becomes interest driven in an extremely instrumental fashion.¹² What also becomes clear is that the process of establishing social change in Ethiopia has provided a seamless passage for intellectuals and their ideas to travel between the student movement, the war field, state institutions, and law making—all the while mobilizing concepts gathered from the university setting as objective arbiters of social conflict. This pattern of addressing and attempting to resolve social conflict was then reproduced in the 2005 elections.

Section 2. The 2005 Federal Elections

According to Christopher Clapham, the May 2005 national elections in Ethiopia took on “the characteristics of ‘founding elections’ akin to the 1994 contest in post-apartheid South Africa.”¹³ Clapham makes this claim based on the fact that almost all observers of the 2005 elections agreed that they were conducted with an unprecedented level of fairness and openness.¹⁴ Thus, for the first time in Ethiopian history, opposition parties and government spokespersons engaged in a series of debates on state television, debates that proved highly popular. In addition, opposition parties were allowed to engage in open mobilization of their constituencies and fielded candidates in both rural and urban areas. As a result, the opposition parties did not engage in the boycott of elections that had become a common occurrence since the fall of the Soviet-backed Derg regime in 1991. Thus, even though the 2005 elections were the third set of national elections since the promulgation of the 1994 post-Derg constitution, they were the first elections in which multiple parties other than those affiliated with the incumbent party participated.¹⁵

The Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) and the United Ethiopian Democratic Front (UEDF) were the two main opposition parties that participated in the May 2005 elections. Both coalitions were founded by prominent members of the Ethiopian academic and intellectual scene, many of whom had also participated in the ESM of the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁶ The popular Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) was founded just

before the elections as a coalition of four existing nonethnic opposition parties, while the United Ethiopian Democratic Front (UEDF) was created in 2003 at a convention held in the United States and included remnants of some of the more active parties that came out of the ESM, such as the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party.¹⁷ Two of its most prominent leaders and spokespersons (Merara Gudina and Beyene Petros) were professors at the University of Addis Ababa with clear roots in the ESM of the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁸

Most of the prominent founders of the CUD party were also Ethiopian intellectuals, many of whom received their higher education in the United States. This group included such prominent figures as Mesfin Wolde-Mariam, Berhanu Nega, and Yacob Haile Mariam: the latter two had held positions as university professors within economics and business departments in the United States, while Wolde-Mariam was employed as a social scientist within the University of Addis Ababa system from the late 1960s to the early 1990s.¹⁹ All of these opposition members had participated in the ESM in the 1960s and 1970s, with Yacob Haile Mariam working as an editor of and contributor to the student movement journals, while Berhanu Nega was a member of the EPRP. By the 1970s, Mesfin Wolde-Mariam was already well known as a professor in the Geography Department at Addis Ababa University (then called the Haile-Selassie I University) and was considered by many to be a progressive ally of the students, though more radical ones saw him as a "bourgeois democrat."²⁰

The UEDF was composed of more social-democratic-type parties, and as a coalition it tended to accept the 1994 national constitution as the correct political arrangement for the country. Thus, UEDF criticisms of the incumbent party mostly focused on the fact that the EPRDF paid only lip service to its own political and constitutional commitments. Given this basic political difference from the CUD, the UEDF played a much less controversial role in the 2005 postelection turmoil.²¹ On the other hand, the CUD party platform seriously challenged the constitutional framework that has determined political arrangements in the country since 1994. For example, the CUD challenged the constitution's nationalities policy by calling for the full repeal of Article 39, which guarantees the right to secession of all of the nations, nationalities, and peoples that make up the federal republic of Ethiopia. The CUD also called for the amendment of Article 40, which states that all land is vested in the state and peoples

of Ethiopia and cannot be subject to sale. And lastly, the CUD called for the repeal of Articles 46 and 47, which determine that the federal system organize itself along ethnic jurisdictions. In effect, this meant that the CUD challenged the status of Eritrean independence, and also questioned the boundaries through which Eritrea was established. In addition, the CUD demanded the establishment of a private land market and the loosening of state control over banking and other financial matters.²²

Earlier in this article, I suggested that what characterizes the connection between intellectual life and political life in Ethiopia is the insistence that politics must transform itself to align with positivist truths discovered by social scientists. Part of what this means is that the social sciences, as well as historiography, have become major battlefields upon which politics is played out. What I want to show now is that the attempt to use the social sciences to transform political commitments on the ground helps account for the policy framework set out in opposition to the EPRDF in the lead-up to the 2005 elections. Thus, if we trace out the intellectual work of Berhanu Nega and Mesfin Wolde-Mariam from 1990 to 2005, what becomes evident is that they were involved in an intellectual project that aimed to shift the terms of the policy debate around land and the nationalities question to one in which the newly popular post-Cold War notions of civil society and human rights would become hegemonic. Below, I discuss how these scholars set out to do this, first through intellectual work within civil society groups, and later by claiming the Ethiopian state as their own when they declared victory in the 2005 elections.

To begin with, we need to connect discursive opposition to the policy framework set out by the EPRDF with the general rise in Addis Ababa of a number of independent civil society organizations (CSOs) and research centers (NGOs) that burst on to the scene in the mid-1990s. The ideas of these new social actors are, in fact, well documented in the publications issued by organizations such as the Ethiopian Economics Association (EEA), the Forum for Social Studies (FSS), the Christian Development Relief Association (CDRA), and the Organization for Social Justice in Ethiopia (SJE). Such publications include *Economic Focus* (a regular bulletin from EEA), and *Medrek* (FSS bulletin), as well as one-off publications issued by these organizations. What should be noted is that most of the publications are compiled from the proceedings of regularly organized conferences and workshops.²³ The publications bear witness to the fact that NGOs in

the 1990s and up to the 2005 elections regularly brought together major players on the Ethiopian intellectual scene. Under the rubric of civil society, therefore, a new intellectual culture was created, one that was moving away from the state-sponsored university setting and working largely under the umbrella of NGOs.

For example, in a variety of conferences and workshops, we find Mesfin Wolde-Mariam working in tandem with other intellectuals, such as Dessalegn Rahmato from the Forum for Social Studies (FSS), to produce a persistent critique of the Ethiopian land tenure system as simply bringing about a “Malthusian disaster” (their term).²⁴ These critics were also keen to point to the contradiction between the decentralized regional system governed by peasant associations (*kebelles*) on the one hand, and the operation of democratic centralism at the party level on the other. An exemplary instance of the coming together of the Malthusian-type critique of the land tenure system is found in the December 1997 bulletin of the Ethiopian Economics Association (EEA), where a roundtable discussion between Dessalegn and Mesfin Wolde-Mariam on “Food Security and Rural Land Policy” is reproduced. Their argument rests on the claim that poverty has been manufactured by the land tenure system, precisely because that system does not lead to the consolidation of property. According to Dessalegn and Mesfin, this fact alone has led to a system of “micro-agriculture” in Ethiopia, with plot sizes too small to bring about economies of scale.²⁵ Moreover, for Dessalegn, the fact that peasants are guaranteed access to land implies that the system does not encourage out-migration from the rural areas. Lastly, Dessalegn argues that periodic land redistribution through the peasant associations leads to tenure insecurity, which in turn implies that peasants are often unwilling to invest in long-term projects on their land. What is striking about the conclusions drawn here is that they stem from a series of ideologically based logical premises about the rationality of human behavior and private property.²⁶ So while Dessalegn Rahmato himself was an extremely active member of the ESM, including being editor of *Challenge*, and while he does not disavow the 1974 “land to the tiller” movement, his present critique ultimately rests on the idea that the Ethiopian peasant is a modern, rational economic actor and as such the Ethiopian state should not be afraid to privatize land. After all, at the very least, freehold will lead to the redistribution of economic incentives on behalf of those who can use them best.

The same issue of the EEA bulletin also includes a vigorous rebuttal of the positions offered by Dessalegn and Mesfin by a number of audience participants who opposed their pessimistic critique of the Ethiopian land tenure system with a series of questions, such as “Who is food insecure?”; “Are all regions food insecure?”; “Is it possible to distinguish between chronic and transitory food insecurity?”; “Is the link between property rights and food security straightforward?”; and “Are there short-term trade-offs that need to be considered in terms of the overall land tenure system?” Thus, what is significant about this mid-1990s debate is that one can already begin to discern the fissures over land policy that play out in the 2005 elections.

In terms of local mobilization, the intellectual advocacy conducted by Mesfin Wolde-Mariam and Berhanu Nega seems to have culminated in the February 2004 conference entitled “Vision 2020,” hosted by the EEA. This gathering included participation from all of the major Ethiopian intellectuals and particularly those involved in civil society research centers such as the aforementioned FSS (founded in the 1990s). The proceeds were then published by the EEA in its bilingual (Amharic/English) newsletter. Interestingly, the conference included much reflection on the recent history of Ethiopia, with the premier scholar of Ethiopian modern history and executive director of the FSS, Bahru Zewde, delivering a paper entitled “What Did We Dream? What Did We Achieve? And Where Are We Heading?” This paper is significant since it in fact reflects on the past and the present of the Ethiopian student movement.²⁷ In addition, Mesfin Wolde-Mariam delivered a fiery talk entitled “Whither Ethiopia?” that also reflected on the stagnant nature of recent Ethiopian politics.²⁸ And in a similar vein, Berhanu Nega’s speech at this conference, entitled “Ethiopia’s Fate after One Generation,” continues to circulate on the Internet today as a defining intellectual and political statement for opponents of the EPRDF.²⁹ Thus, what we can say is that at this conference, a consensus seems to have emerged that transformative change was needed for the country; however, the overall tone is one of pessimism about the country’s recent political history.

Coupled with the type of intellectual activity hosted by the EEA in the early part of the first decade of the twenty-first century, Mesfin Wolde-Mariam also became well known in Addis Ababa for his speeches at workshops, again hosted by various NGO groups. For example, in July 2003

he gave a speech at a CDRA workshop held at the Economic Commission for Africa headquarters, entitled “One Cannot Make the Donkey Move by Beating the Load: Breaking the Cycle of Recurrent Famine in Ethiopia,” in which he repeats the theme of a Malthusian disaster awaiting Ethiopia then goes on to lambaste the audience as being morally weak for accepting the current land tenure system in Ethiopia. Similarly, in 2002, Mesfin had given a speech at his alma mater, Clark University in the United States, during the inauguration of the International Development, Community and Environment Program, in which he argued that Ethiopia is still caught in the grip of a Leninist land tenure policy and simultaneously called on humanity to embrace American-style freedom and democracy.³⁰

What is also clear when reading through the documents produced by each of the aforementioned CSO/NGO research groups is that they understand their own role as civil society groups as being the leading lights of the democratization process in Ethiopia. They lay claim to exactly this point in a programmatic and prescriptive fashion, without ever defining what they mean by civil society or democracy beyond formal definitions.³¹ Civil society is not defined through looking at actual social processes specific to Ethiopia. Instead, it is defined by being programmatically able to achieve something, usually derived from what civil society has supposedly achieved globally. The definition for civil society is often taken unproblematically from organizations like CIVICUS, and then that definition is applied to Ethiopia.³² As such, civil society *qua* civil society is seen as a catalyst for change, able to bring about the development of larger democratic processes and to quicken the drive for equity. Importantly, civil society is also seen as having the capacity to engender innovative approaches to the rallying of public opinion. Moreover, within the literature generated by these groups, whenever there is some attempt to historicize civil society in Ethiopia, that history tends to refer to those local and international organizations that donors preferred to deal with given the civil war/junta of the 1980s. CSOs are collapsed with NGOs, and 1991 becomes a benchmark year for the formation of a modern civil society in Ethiopia. Political liberalization is posited as an important moment when NGOs were able to operate with some degree of freedom. Moreover, the associational life that belongs to the so-called traditional community organizing patterns (for example, burial societies) is simply theorized as pre-civil society, whereas mass-based organizations such as the peasant associations and trade unions

are sidelined in the discussions at both the theoretical and practical levels because they are regarded as simply party-affiliated organizations.³³ Thus, even by the description generated by the CSO groups themselves, what we are really talking about in terms of CSOs are donor-dependent NGOs engaged in development and service delivery. Indeed, even in their own reports, the CSO groups claim that their constituency base is small, with little or no capacity for policy engagement at the state level. And yet, the CSOs continue to see themselves as a third space between the state and private life—a neutral space of knowledge production and human rights advocacy that can mediate social conflict. These organizations become the space for the production of concepts that will also mediate social conflict.

It is striking, when reading through the research issued by these CSO groups, to find a seamless connection between their policy recommendations as advocates and academics and the policy formulated within the CUD party manifesto. Moreover, there is often congruence between World Bank policy as it relates to the land tenure question in Ethiopia, the writings of locally based Ethiopian intellectuals, and the CUD party manifesto. Indeed, the CUD party manifesto includes ideas and language that seem to be directly lifted from a number of research papers issued by the previously mentioned researchers, especially the work of Mesfin Wolde-Mariam and Berhanu Nega, as well as the work published with the EEA.

Thus, by 2002 what we see is how the EEA begins to work in tandem with World Bank activity in Ethiopia. We also find Berhanu Nega leading a major research program on land tenure with the EEA and at the same time participating as a major researcher with the World Bank land tenure group, eventually producing a research report for the EEA that bears an uncanny resemblance to the policy recommendations coming out of the bank itself. Moreover, the opinions and conclusions in the EEA report are then echoed through Berhanu Nega's coauthored World Bank reports. Thus, on the side of the EEA, in 2002 Berhanu Nega published the report "Land Tenure and Agriculture: Development in Ethiopia," and at the same time and in conjunction with this report, other EEA researchers led a review of policies related to landholding under the various political regimes in Ethiopia. Later, in 2003, the World Bank land tenure group published a series of articles on tenure security and land markets in Ethiopia with a research team under the direction of the well-known World Bank land researcher Klaus Denninger along with Berhanu Nega and others.³⁴

Interestingly, the EEA research report, “Land Tenure and Agriculture: Development in Ethiopia,” published in 2002, attempts to assess Ethiopian farmers’ opinions and judgments on how the land tenure system has impacted their livelihoods. The primary method the report uses to do this is a gargantuan survey of 8,500 households in every region of the country except Gambela. The report also includes an assessment of “stakeholders” opinions on the land tenure system. Of course, by stakeholders, what the researchers primarily mean are business persons operating within the private sphere, as well as policymakers within both government and the CSO sector who mostly reside in the urban areas. Together, the overall aim of the two surveys is to try to connect the current land tenure system to its impact on the rural economy and agricultural development.

The household survey used a stratified random sampling framework, with questions written in English and then translated into Amharic and other local languages (depending on where the survey was being conducted). The researchers then used local postsecondary students to conduct the survey. While the report discusses the limits to the survey in terms of outreach and representativeness, it never discusses the problems with the questions posed to the research subjects themselves. Indeed, the researchers take the questions asked to be self-evident in terms of what they might mean for the participants. For instance, the researchers ask the same questions in all of the regions surveyed and limit the answers to multiple choices so as to obtain comparable answers across the regions. However, the questions assume that an ethnically Somali pastoralist will have the same notion of what private property or freehold means as an Amhara farmer growing grain in the highlands of Gondar. As an example, the survey asks farmers to suggest alternatives to the current land tenure system, and the choices offered are limited to the following: “a) free hold, b) a system that allows for better security, c) public ownership (secured rights), d) other.”³⁵ Another example asks if farmers who hold their land as private property would sell it if they had a bad harvest.³⁶ The farmers were then given the opportunity to answer the question in a “yes” or “no” format, and what we find is that most farmers answered “no” to this question. The report then uses this as evidence that farmers are rational actors who do not need to be protected by the state in order to maintain access to land. The report goes on to advocate privatization of the land tenure system as more or less a good thing. However, because the survey also showed that

farmers were not keen on unrestricted freehold—with a large percentage of them preferring state ownership of land with secure rights—the policy recommendation of the report offers a compromise between these two positions and as such advocates that the government ought to allow for the creation of a land rental market.

Starkly absent from the report is any attempt to think meaningfully about the notion that the individual farmer's "rational" answers might easily be contradicted by day-to-day reality. The report never deals directly with the fact that the two answers cited above might indicate the existence of other kinds of social contradictions. Indeed, the report does not consider how, despite whatever logical choice the farmer might have made in the context of a survey, the individual farmer's choices are in fact conditioned by the political economy of the entire productive system in Ethiopia, in which agriculture plays a substantial role. Because the report's methodology takes the questions being asked as eliciting self-evident truths, the report must deny that a contradiction can exist between an ideally logical answer and an answer as it might play out in reality.

The EEA report therefore concludes that the government's emphasis on state ownership of land framed by the policy of agricultural development-led industrialization (ADLI) is wrongheaded—instead, the EEA proposes that the whole "social structure of accumulation" needs to be considered.³⁷ Here, what the report means to suggest is that it is possible to produce an institutional context to change individual behavior. However, what ought also to be noted is that the peasant farmer is always referred to as an economic agent. Thus, if neoclassical economics is concerned only with the satisfaction of private ends as the definition of the public good, the EEA has a more classical Adam Smith-type commitment to development, in that it assumes that promoting market-driven social relations can create rational economic actors who engage in higher productive efficiencies, thereby establishing a collective social good. As such, the development question and the political question for the EEA turn on how best to produce good entrepreneurs and risk takers.

The EEA report does not connect the individual to the context of the productive system in the country and the region as it actually exists. Rather, it assumes the need to equitably distribute economic incentives so that everyone can behave like economic maximizers, and suggests that the problem with the current land tenure system is that the right incentives

do not exist because the system hoards the economic rewards that need to be freed up in the country. The economic and development conundrum for Ethiopia, from the perspective of the EEA, then becomes a question of how to reproduce the right kind of individuated person by rooting this individuation within the actual productive system of the country (what the EEA calls “structures of accumulation”). At the same time, then, the research report can be summed up as one in which the EEA’s researchers presume the capitalist subject as existing a priori to the establishment of some kind of pure capitalist social relations. At the same time, when such a subject is not found, the EEA report makes the tautological claim that the landholding systems and their attendant peasant associations must be the reason behind the lack of rational economic actors. Of course, as I have already suggested, the problem with the theoretical and methodological commitment of the report is that it assumes what it wants to produce: the real nature of what it means to be a rational human actor.

The development quest for the EEA can therefore be equated with the problem of how to set up a situation in which people can behave like their natural selves—that is, a situation in which they can behave like atomized, self-maximizing humans, but also in which that type of human being is seen as transhistorical. Indeed, for the EEA, all Ethiopian peasants are in essence modern rational economic actors (and this is also its definition of what it means to be human). As such, for the EEA, it is just the current political system that keeps people from acting as their true selves. Politics must therefore be brought back into economics in order to set up a social system through which economically rational behavior is produced (and in which politics can later on be separated from economic life). The overall argument, then, is to create a moral framework from which the capitalist subject can fully emerge under conditions in which his behavior will be rewarded.

In *Land, Poverty and Livelihoods in an Era of Globalization*, Haroon Akram-Lohdi and colleagues suggest that the current World Bank definition of what a good land policy ought to be includes such factors as promoting owner-operated farms, allowing for freely operating land markets, promoting the equitable distribution of assets, and recognizing that there is a need to maintain some communal land holdings. But most importantly, for the World Bank, there is a need to secure transparent and enforceable property rights as the critical precondition for investment and economic growth. As such, the World Bank does support land reform in the effort to

eliminate conflicts between parallel sets of rights.³⁸ Moreover, Akram-Lohdi and colleagues argue that what this somewhat heterodox land policy framework indicates for the bank is that land considerations have become nonideological but are now self-evident truths.

Similarly, then (and based on a survey method that takes methodological individualism as a given), the EEA report goes on to argue that state ownership of land yields negative effects on land productivity and produces lower efficiency levels than would be achieved if there was a working private land market. Moreover, the report argues that there is a need for entrepreneurial agents to access credit and land (using land as a mortgage), hence the need for a land market. The report goes on to argue that there is a need to encourage marginal farmers to out-migrate, the benefit of which will be to “encourage accumulation of land in the hands of entrepreneurial and economically successful farmers.”³⁹ In addition, the report claims that land redistribution through the peasant association is too political and as such creates tenure insecurity and prevents landowners from investing in sustainable use of the land. The report therefore argues that the government places too much emphasis on agricultural extension programs, that is, it is too technology focused.⁴⁰ Instead, the EEA argues that it is necessary to change “incentive structures,” “institutional configurations,” and “governance” and “risk behaviour.”⁴¹

By the late 1990s, locally based CSO groups in Ethiopia took up this latter claim as the commonsense position on the Ethiopian land tenure system, and by 2005 this position became part of the official policy of the CUD party platform. Indeed, the bulk of the policy issues in the CUD party manifesto circulate around land privatization and its connection to the nationalities question. A large part of the manifesto is dedicated to a critique of the agricultural system in Ethiopia and especially the land tenure system. The critique also seems directly lifted from the EEA research report. Using very similar language to the EEA report, the manifesto, analogously calls for “the restructuring of patterns of accumulation” as well as arguing the need to expand the banking and insurance sector so as to induce savings and capital formation. Importantly, the manifesto calls for the amending of the constitution to allow for mixed private, public, and communal ownership of land. Moreover, given that the Ethiopian constitution embeds the land question within the nationalities question, the CUD party manifesto does not just call for the amendment of Article 39 but for its full repeal.

The CUD critique of the land and nationalities question centers on the fact that the constitution protects people as members of a group (nation, nationality, or people) but not as individuals. Indeed, the CUD manifesto claims that the national constitution reflects the party platform of the incumbent EPRDF and as such simply works in favor of revolutionary democracy. The CUD manifesto therefore calls on the government “to . . . give capitalism more than lip service” and “adjust to the world’s new power alignment.”⁴² In addition, the CUD accuses the TPLF/EPRDF of selling out national sovereignty to external forces. In the specific case of Eritrea, the CUD claims that the Ethiopian state has legitimate complaints about national maritime demarcation, border demarcation, and the status of Ethiopians in Eritrea. Ultimately, then, the CUD sees that the problem of ethnic conflict cannot be resolved with the policy of ethnic self-determination. To the CUD, such a policy is treason.⁴³

Echoing the EEA report, the CUD party manifesto claims that the problem of the country is not one of natural endowment but one of good governance and democracy. It suggests that the current socioeconomic order thrives on poverty, with development itself being a threat to the ruling elite. The CUD claims that the EPRDF would rather endure the increased impoverishment of its people in order to maintain its own luxurious lifestyle.⁴⁴ In contrast, the CUD platform adopts a highly moral tone, claiming that there is a need for behavioral change in the Ethiopian political scene, and calling for the deployment of “honesty and righteous human character” in politics.⁴⁵

Fundamentally, the CUD is committed to liberal democracy, while it also “combines useful values from social democracy and consensus democracy.”⁴⁶ Moreover, it emphasizes a commitment to individual freedom, and to free markets based on competition and on cultural and political change.⁴⁷ From a social-democratic perspective, the CUD adopts the idea of an equitable sharing of taxes and some kind of commitment to social welfare but ultimately preaches the need to adopt liberal market economic principles into specific Ethiopian conditions. For the CUD, this is what will ensure a more equitable income distribution.

What we see, then, is that during the 2005 elections, political groups were divided over the meaning and the legacy of the revolutionary process that began in 1974. On the one hand, the incumbent regime insisted on the need to transform the remnants of the prerevolutionary state and the

society by following the historical trajectory and policies initiated by the Ethiopian student movement. The EPRDF proposed state institutions themselves as the arbiters of social conflict. On the other hand, the opposition insisted on the necessity of further separating state and society as the panacea for resolving social problems. The opposition proposed civil society as a universally accessible space, not only a space through which social critique could be channeled but a space in which civil society itself could become the arbiter of social conflict. The opposition then mobilized itself around a number of key social science concepts drawn from the neutral space of civil society discourse as a way to promote hegemonic power around itself, while the EPRDF held on to ethnic federalism and the right to self-determination within the framework of revolutionary democracy as its transformative tool kit.

In the foregoing encounter, we see again how social science contests paralleled conflict in the social arena. The ideas that produced the Ethiopian student movement in the 1960s continue to this day to generate a complex history of debate and conflict in the country. While the process produced social actors who may nowadays be defiant of the terms set by the ESM, their framework and form of argument lie within the ESM. Thus, even if many of the current practitioners of both social sciences and politics in Ethiopia reject the content of those early debates, they nevertheless continue to be deeply implicated in its positivist form.

Discussion

Since the 1970s, within both African studies and area studies there has been an ongoing crisis, in which it is claimed that the explanatory frameworks for doing social science work are either overly universalistic or overly particular.⁴⁸ As such, the relevancy of both the applied and the theoretical social sciences has been called into question.⁴⁹ Thus, within African studies, not only has there been a revision of the field's normative frameworks but there has also been a debate about the nature of the production of social science knowledge in Africa. Within this debate, Partha Chatterjee has linked the limits for doing social science research in the Third World with the larger issue of the limits placed on Third World nationalist thought.⁵⁰ Following Chatterjee's lead, Mahmood Mamdani has also demonstrated

that the limits to knowing Africa are linked to forms of governing Africa.⁵¹ Combining the positions of both Chatterjee and Mamdani, what I have gleaned from this debate is that epistemological positions are always tethered to structures of power and forms of being. For me, what this implies is that while the social sciences pretend to be a transhistorical and universally accessible form of knowledge production, their origin can be linked to the social history of capitalist and colonial development. At the same time, I also want to argue that it is this universalizing conceit of the social sciences that provides the overall epistemological framework for the claims made both by the Ethiopian student movement and by Ethiopian civil society advocates in the 2005 elections. Thus, in the final section of this article, I want to link the origins of the social sciences to civil society as a way to come to the insight that both of these groups are ontologically and pragmatically committed to bourgeois freedom as an ideal form of knowledge production. What ultimately links my inquiry into the 2005 elections with the ESM is the question of what is ideologically reproduced each time we practice the social sciences as a space of universal (and neutral) meaning making.

To this day, there is very little work that theorizes the specificity of civil society in Africa, even if, as we have seen, there is a multitude of work that defines civil society in programmatic and prescriptive terms. This lacuna is striking, given that the notion of civil society is a central focus within sociology's foundational texts; moreover, it is also a key concept in the history of modern European social thought, whether in the writings of Adam Smith, Hegel, or Marx. That civil society is a key concept for the above mentioned thinkers lies in the fact that the origins of civil society capture an important moment in the transition of Europe to a capitalist-dominated economy. Indeed, what Caporoso and Levine have argued is that the ideas of the early practitioners of the "social sciences" are actually embedded in the late-eighteenth-century European perception that within European society there was a shift in the way private wants were being satisfied. This perceptual shift in fact leads to a realignment of the terms used to describe social order. What then becomes emphasized (particularly by political economists) is that society now organizes itself through its own social laws, processes, and imperatives. As we know now, these new social laws and processes are what came to be called civil society. What came to be known as the social sciences were less concerned with

establishing an account of political processes, conflicts, and deliberations, *but*, instead, rather more concerned with establishing a historical account and description of the unintended consequences of private interests and activities. Politics as such was no longer emphasized in terms of accounting for large historical processes; rather, politics was seen as slavishly following the forces immanent in society. What this implies is that the rise of civil society was seen by the early social science thinkers to be in contradiction and opposition to politics.⁵²

If the early practitioners of the social sciences disagreed about the ways in which society can come to terms with the social effects of capitalist social relations, what was not disputed, and thus what is instructive about the history of civil society for developing economies today, is that as capitalist social relations developed in Europe, workers were no longer obligated to work through extraeconomic compulsion. Civil society was thus seen as the space that opposed extraeconomic coercion (overt political coercion). In Marxist parlance, what this implies is that the capitalist worker/wage laborer is said to be free from the social bonds that tied him to a traditional community (feudal social relations), and at the same time the worker is free to sell his labor to whomever he likes. Thus, under capitalist social relations, economic and political life is split into two: society is freed from the burden of politics. Civil society, then, is the autonomous space created by the separation of economics from extraeconomic coercion.

What I am arguing here is that what is specific to capitalism is that the separation of the formal political sphere from civil society produces a form of freedom that is entirely new; the worker after all is said to be doubly free. Thus, what is also central to the constitution of modern social thought is both an experience of this freedom and also its theorization. Civil society as a modern concept is invented to both describe and explain the immanent social forces that link otherwise independent producers.⁵³ As such, civil society is a concept that is central to constituting the practice of the social sciences: it is the space of bourgeois freedom that allows knowledge of society to be assumed and also produced when we practice social science. I would also argue that, today, it is this very same bourgeois freedom that we assume whenever we produce social science knowledge. Indeed, what we can say is that most of the thinkers that we now take to be the founders of the social sciences were in fact struggling to come to terms with the new phenomenon that we have come to know as civil society.⁵⁴ The rise of civil

society is therefore a central social phenomenon that also coincides with the founding of the social sciences as a set of academic disciplines.

However, this raises an interesting paradox: how it is possible that social life can be separated from formal political life and yet reproduce collective experience across generations. Another way of putting this conundrum: how can political subjectivity simultaneously be a site of both objective and subjective meaning making and yet claim to be apolitical? Indeed, for me it is this *apolitical politics*, embedded in both the concept and practice of civil society in the West, that allows capitalist freedom to be assumed as something that is universally attainable. Being doubly free, then, becomes a space of neutral knowledge production—it is what allows for the social sciences to parade themselves as neutral. What I also want to argue is that this intellectual posturing is ideologically reproduced each time we practice social sciences; it is in fact what makes social science knowledge possible in the first place. In a country with an established civil society, at best the social sciences become the science of the forces immanent in civil society, but more importantly they can appoint themselves as a neutral arbiter of the relations contained within civil society. However, in a country like Ethiopia, where approximately 80–85 percent of the population is self-employed through smallholder agriculture, how can we talk about something like civil society?⁵⁵ Indeed, in Africa and Asia, capitalism to this day relies on extraeconomic forces (politically constituted property relations) in order to function. Thus, following the work of Mahmood Mamdani, I would suggest that civil society in Africa is a form of power that is rooted in urban areas, and that is obsessed with the idea of itself as antitribal and antitraditional but in fact has none of the historical attributes of a European civil society. Given this story, so many of the comparative political and economic questions that the social sciences ask about Africa will inevitably lead us to a dead end unless they can account for actually existing African developmental trajectories. First and foremost, then, I want to suggest that liberal democracy and civil society as they both appear to us in the West are rarely the space of progress that is often claimed on their behalf in the Global South—and this has everything to do with the history of production in that part of the world.

Indeed, as we have seen, in Ethiopia, civil society is a supremely political space, but the specificity of its politics lies not so much in its structural

defects as in the crystallization of a form of power that continually reproduces the binary of rural vs. urban, customary vs. modern, tribal vs. civilized, and so forth. The problem with civil society in Ethiopia is *not* that it separates the economic from the political so as to continually recreate the space of bourgeois neutrality, but that it must deny the social differences that are rooted in the way indigeneity, ethnicity, and the native have been historically constructed and reproduced for the sake of colonialism and capitalism. The consequence of this is that bourgeois-looking institutions reproduce the form of power that draws out the differences we have already mentioned instead of functioning as neutral peacemakers, so that formal democratic institutions become antidemocratic machines. Inevitably, a social science practice that takes its own bourgeois neutrality for granted will map onto and even formalize the antidemocratic tendencies that structure forms of rule with forms of acting. Knowledge production then crystallizes around the political contests over the rural and the urban, the modern and the customary.

Thus, unarmed with, or indifferent to, a theory of the history of capitalism, many contemporary social science researchers in Africa become part of a social process that justifies attempting to reconstitute man as the self-maximizing individual that only very specific capitalist market relations can create in reality. At the ideological level, the social science researcher becomes the equivalent of the social theorist who assumes the freedom of the doubly free worker as a universal goal; and at the epistemological level, the researcher assumes capitalist freedom as both the condition and the goal of his or her intellectual activity (despite whatever personal claims are made to the contrary).

The question for us now is how do we assess the processes of knowledge production that have attempted to tell us something about the ways in which people are living in Ethiopia but in tandem contributed to the overall attempt to change the structure of the state? Clearly, the activity of practicing the social sciences is class specific and is based on the productive activities of a specific social formation but is alienated from certain producers and classes within that social formation. What this means is that rather than pretend to produce neutral social science knowledge and as such look for some abstract model of democracy for Ethiopia, it is important to trace the meaning of the different social relations and institutions that are embedded in society. In particular, we need to find

out what the legacies of the revolution and the civil wars are, rather than simply, mantra-like, saying that the new regimes post-Haile Selassie are authoritarian. By definition, the struggle that led to the 1974 revolution and the resulting civil wars cannot be so vacant of meaning. Thus, for me, it is important not only to connect the state to a class analysis, but at the same time to circle back and place democratic structures into economic structures. This is important, otherwise democracy and elections become part of a technocratic toolbox for development rather than a substantive expression of real social forces and relations. To reiterate, the outcome can only be the kind of moralistic prescriptions that a supposedly neutral, positivistic social science claims to offer.

Turning again to the discourses of the 2005 elections in Ethiopia, what we see is that when liberal democracy is proffered against the Ethiopian regime's avowed revolutionary democracy as supposedly having the institutional checks and balances to reverse the imbalances inherent in what is taken to be an authoritarian African regime, liberal democracy itself is lifted out of the story of its own historical formation and is seen in purely formal terms. The Ethiopian regime is then discussed in terms of good and bad, where good and bad are measured by how close the regime has come in terms of setting up the apparently universally recognizable institutions of liberal democracy. At the same time, what cannot be analyzed is that the institutional processes connected to liberal democracy often entrench myriad odd forms of nonstate and state-led dictatorship and rule in countries of the Global South.

The Ethiopian elections of 2005 have for the most part been situated between two poles that are of course analogous to the more universal debates that one finds within African studies, whereby the state in African politics is described as corrupt and patrimonial as if Africans are just so many backward people.⁵⁶ Moreover, the state is said to be held hostage to patron-client relations, with markets unable to develop or even just free themselves from tradition.⁵⁷ This debate has of course also filtered into common parlance, and from the point of view of international NGOs and bilateral aid organizations, the prescription to end all of this African "backwardness" is that state failure ought to be corrected by weakening the state's command over its resources. At the same time, autonomous civil society organizations should be strengthened as a buttress against rent-seeking clients of the state.⁵⁸ Not surprisingly, these were also the

propositions adopted by the main opposition CUD party in the 2005 elections. But more importantly, I have tried in this article to illustrate how the universal language of the social sciences became the basis through which the CUD organized its platform.

Gebru Tareke has reminded us that happy is the nation that still knows how to rebel, but he has also written that “happier still is the nation which utilizes the historical memory of collective resistance to mold a more egalitarian and coherent community.”⁵⁹ But this then raises the particular question that Sarah Vaughn asked of the present regime:

Can a revolutionary party with an evangelical belief in the superiority of its own political programme seek to establish a competitive electoral process as a desired goal in its own right? Could (should?) elections really be anything other than a means to an end, a process useful only for demonstrating anew the virtues of revolutionary democracy and democratic centralism? If the goal is winning at all costs, how can the contest be anything other than zero-sum, how can “their gain” be anything other than “our loss”?⁶⁰

At the moment, it would seem that the question of elections is reduced to a zero-sum game. On the other hand, if the process of social transformation involves more than the mobilization of social forces around the binaries of “tradition vs. modernity” or “civil society vs. the customary,” “or intellectual vanguard vs. ignoramus,” then perhaps an accounting of the collective resistance to both oppression and exploitation would mean that elections could become something other than contests over whether liberal freedom can be established. Instead, they could become contests over the ways in which social policy could continue to be located in the possibilities opened up by the Ethiopian revolution even as the revolutionary institutions are transformed. In this way, social sciences practice in Ethiopia could also transform itself into a social critic with a task: as opposed to what it is now, which is a coercive and technocratic ideological player masquerading as a neutral arbiter of facts. It is this latter transformation that seems most urgent in Ethiopia, 40 years after the beginning of revolutionary struggle.

NOTES

Partial funding for the research undertaken for this article was provided by the International Development Research Centre (Canada).

1. The following blogs represent a cross section of popular debates on the 2005 Ethiopian election. See *Weichqugud*, <http://weichegud.blogspot.com/>; *Ethio-Zagol*, "The State of Ethiopia," <http://seminawork.blogspot.com/>; *Ethiopundit*, <http://ethiopundit.blogspot.com/>; *Enset*, <http://www.enset.org>; and *Ethiomedial*, <http://ethiomedial.com>. In terms of academic discourses, I am thinking of two important interventions. The first is Christopher Clapham, "Comments on the Ethiopian Crisis," 7 November 2005, <http://www.african.cam.ac.uk/people/registry/subjectlist/clapham.html> (accessed 20 July 2011). The second actually consists of a series of interventions, those of Donald Levine. See, for example, Donald Levine, "Shimagle Reflects on the May 15 Elections," *Ethiopia Review*, 19 May 2006, http://www.ethiopianreview.com/2006/00005192006Article_DonaldLevine.html.
2. The ruling EPRDF coalition was founded in 1989 by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (EPDM). TPLF's history dates back to the mid-1970s while the EPDM was founded in the late 1980s and is often claimed to be an off-shoot of various sections of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP). The EPRDF coalition now consists of the Oromo Peoples Democratic Organization, the Amhara National Democratic Movement, the Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement and Tigrayan People's Liberations Front. For a more detailed description of the history of the EPRDF see, Kjetil Tronvoll and Sarah Vaughn, *The Culture of Power in Contemporary Ethiopian Political Life* (Stockholm: SIDA Studies, 2003).
3. Here I am paraphrasing the discussion on page 607 of Tobias Hagmann, "Ethiopian Political Culture Strikes Back: A Rejoinder to J. Abbink," *African Affairs* 105, no. 421 (2006): 605–12. See also J. Abbink, "Discomfiture of Democracy? The 2005 Election Crisis in Ethiopia and Its Aftermath," *African Affairs* 105, no. 419 (2006): 173–99.
4. Many of the journals, brochures, and pamphlets that ended up forming the corpus of the student movement literature were published on the university campus of what was then called Haile-Selassie I University College. However, an important element in the evolution of the locally

based Ethiopian student movement was the influence of Ethiopian students studying in North America, Europe, Lebanon, and elsewhere (today we might call these students Ethiopia's diaspora, though that is not how they would have described themselves). For the purposes of doing research for this article, I focused mostly on reading through *Challenge*, which was the premier English-language journal of the Ethiopian student movement and was published by the Ethiopian Student Union of North America (ESUNA). Within the various issues of *Challenge*, one can find the minutes of meetings for the whole of the student movement. However, one can also find copies of some of the major articles that affected the development of the student movement. See, for instance, Habos Gabre Yesus, "Land Reform: Plus Ça Change?" *Challenge* 5, no. 1 (March 1965): 3–14; Tumtu Lencho, "The Question of Nationalities and Class Struggle in Ethiopia," *Challenge* 11, no. 2 (July 1971): 3–66. Also, see Ethiopian Students Association in North America, "Repression in Ethiopia," *Challenge* 9, no. 2 (August 1969): 35–38.

5. Over the past few years, a number of new works have been published by academics who were members of the Ethiopian student movement during the 1960s and 1970s. Major texts that can be included in this group are Messay Kebede's *Radicalism and Cultural Dislocation in Ethiopia: 1960–1974* (2008), Gebru Tareke's *The Ethiopian Revolution* (2009), and Bahru Zewde's important 2014 publication, *The Quest for Socialist Utopia*. Collectively, these works help us rethink the social roots of the Ethiopian revolution by demonstrating the impact of the student movement on both policy outcomes and state formation in the period following the 1974 revolution. But even more striking is that each author's reinterpretation of the Ethiopian revolution can also be understood as a retrospective analysis of a political project launched by his cohort of student colleagues. In the end, Messay rejects the legacy of the student movement in favor of the restoration of an authentic national culture, which he takes to be the Christian culture of North-Central Ethiopia and Eritrea. As such, Messay's main theoretical concern is to offer a speculative account of why Ethiopian students in the 1970s preferred Marxism to the path of reform. On the other hand, what Bahru and Gebru's books have in common is an attempt to use new archival material to shed light on well-known events. Thus, Bahru Zewde's book stands out as a carefully researched work, written within the empiricist

tradition, which shows that the outcome of the 1974 revolution was the culmination of a series of organizational machinations within student groups that stretch back to at least 1965. Bahru's book is able to show this by mobilizing the copious amount of material written by members of the Ethiopian student groups as the book's main archival source. However, precisely because Bahru Zewde's book is committed to merely showing the events as they happened, he offers only a limited interpretation of events. Thus, like Messay, Bahru sees the ESM members as belonging to an elite class of students engaged in adolescent rebellion and with a penchant for a cult of violence. This cult of violence then becomes an explanation for the fissures between the various groups within the student movement and later between the various political parties in the postrevolutionary period. Thus, for me, Bahru's work fails to grapple with the question of the social content that might be buried within the political narratives expressed within the Ethiopian revolution. However, Bahru's book does return us to the literature produced by the student movement, and he also provides us with a useful timeline that tracks the relationship between the student movement and political developments in Ethiopia. Gebru Tareke, however, examines the archives of the Ethiopian Ministry of Defense in order to show that there are clear continuities between the student groups that organized in the urban areas prior to 1974 and the rural insurgencies that dominated Ethiopia in the 1980s. He then posits that the post-1991 regime must be seen as the continuation of the revolution of 1974. As such, Gebru's book is one of the few histories of the Ethiopian revolution that uses the tools and theoretical repertoire that belonged to the student movement as part of the tool kit used to rethink the origins and consequences of the Ethiopian revolution. See Messay Kebede, *Radicalism and Cultural Dislocation in Ethiopia, 1960–1974* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2008); Gebru Tareke, *The Ethiopian Revolution* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009); Bahru Zewde, *The Quest for Socialist Utopia. The Ethiopian Student Movement, 1960–1974* (Oxford: James Currey, 2014). See also Kiflu Tadesse, *The Generation: The History of the Ethiopian People's Party—Part I: From the Early Beginnings to 1975* (Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 1993).

6. See, for instance, David Ottaway and Marina Ottaway, *Ethiopia: Empire in Revolution* (London: Africana Publishing House, 1978).
7. See Christopher Clapham, *Transformation and Continuity in Revolutionary*

Ethiopia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). And especially Donald L. Donham, *Marxist Modern: An Ethnographic History of the Ethiopian Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

8. Evidence that the current regime understood itself to be a legacy of the student movement and the Ethiopian revolution can of course be found in a number of brochures and political documents issued by both the EPRDF and the TPLF. Thus, in the 1989 EPRDF brochure entitled *EPRDF: A Democratic Alternative for Ethiopia*, the EPRDF describes itself as part of the 1974 revolution and its legacy but also posits itself as finally able to resolve the national and class contradictions of the country that were raised by the 1974 revolution. In the brochure, the EPRDF explains that the 1974 revolution lacked experienced leaders, which is why the democratic aspirations of the people could not be addressed. The brochure then claims that 1974 ended up being a mere military victory, whose major characteristic was a red terror. Accordingly, the brochure argues that the question of self-determination for the nationalities contained within Ethiopia should be the starting point and focal point for political organizing without undermining the class struggle. See *Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front: A Democratic Alternative for Ethiopia* (London: EPRDF, 1989). Similarly, the constitution adopted by the TPLF at its second organizational meeting starts with an introduction that includes subheadings such as "Our Revolution and the World Situation." The introduction places the TPLF within the context of the 1974 revolution but also identifies with the critique of Soviet imperialism. In the introduction, the TPLF explains that it is against class exploitation and tired of the battle between imperialism and local feudalism in the Third World. In fact, the introduction identifies this particular struggle as a worldwide struggle. The preamble then goes on to define the struggle of the TPLF in terms of restoring national rights, but guided by a working class ideology. As such, it sees its main constituency as the poor peasants and to some extent urban workers, students, and informal workers. See TPLF, *The Constitution of the Tigray People's Liberation Front: Adopted at the Second Organizational Meeting of the TPLF*, Ethiopia (May 1983). Found at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies archives.
9. Sarah Vaughn, "Ethnicity and Power in Ethiopia" (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2003), 19.
10. See also Sarah Vaughn discussion of the relationship between positivism

and ethnic self determinations in Vaughn, *Ethnicity and Power in Ethiopian*, 203.

11. Alessandro Triulzi, "Battling with the Past: New Frameworks for Ethiopian Historiography," in *Remapping Ethiopia: Socialism and After*, ed. Wendy James, Alessandro Triulzi, and E. Kurimoto (Oxford: James Currey, 2002), 278.
12. In *Peasants and Nationalism in Eritrea: A Critique of Ethiopian Studies*, Jordan Gebre-Mehdin attributes the "idealized reading of Ethiopia as an ancient empire unified by the existence of a great cultural tradition" to the work of the social anthropologist Donald Levine (Gebre-Mehdin, 7). That there are multiple sources other than the School of Oriental and African Studies that have helped foster the Orientalist approach to Ethiopian Studies is undoubtedly true, but this should not distract us from Triulzi's wider point, which is that the Orientalist approach can be tied to a wider state-building project in Ethiopia. Of course, Levine's work has been profoundly influential in Ethiopian studies and he himself has not shied away from using his work to intervene in public policy debates. Indeed, after the election of 2005, Levine played a mediator's role between the ruling party and jailed opposition members and, in 2009, Levine was invited to explain Ethiopian culture at the World Bank. See Jordan Gebre-Mehdin, *Peasants and Nationalism in Eritrea: A Critique of Ethiopian Studies*. Also see Donald Levine, *Greater Ethiopia: The Evolution of a Multiethnic Society*.
13. Clapham, "Comments on the Ethiopian Crisis."
14. *EU Election Observation Mission Ethiopia, Final Report on the Legislative Elections* (Brussels: European Union, 2005).
15. See Terrence Lyons, *Ethiopia in 2005: The Beginning of a Transition?* Africa Notes no 25 (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2006), http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/anotes_0601.pdf (accessed July 20, 2011).
16. Terrence Lyons, "Conflict-Generated Diasporas and Transnational Politics in Ethiopia," *Conflict, Security and Development* 7, no. 4 (2007): 529–49.
17. The coalition included the following: the All Ethiopia Unity Party (AEUP), the United Ethiopians Democratic Party–Medhin (UEDP–Medhin), the Ethiopian Democratic League (EDL), and the Rainbow Ethiopia–Movement for Social Justice and Democracy (Rainbow). See Lyons, "Conflict-Generated Diasporas and Transnational Politics in Ethiopia."

18. Abbink, "Discomfiture of Democracy?" 181. See also Gudina Merera, *Ethiopia: Competing Ethnic Nationalism, 1960–2000* (Addis Ababa: Chamber Printing House, 2003).
19. Abbink, "Discomfiture of Democracy," 181.
20. Mesfin Wolde-Mariam's activities during the student movement are discussed in Randi Balsvik, *Haile Selassie's Students: The Intellectual and Social Background to Revolution, 1952–1977* (Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994).
21. Lyons, "Conflict-Generated Diasporas and Transnational Politics in Ethiopia," 538.
22. Coalition for Unity and Democracy (Kinijit), *Party Manifesto* (unofficial party translation), <http://andinet.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/KINIJIT-MANIFESTO-English.pdf> (accessed 20 July 2011).
23. See, for example, Bahru Zewde and Taye Assefa, *Civil Society at the Crossroads: Challenges and Perspectives in Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Studies, 2008); Alemayehu Areda, *Maximizing Local CSOs: Civic Engagement Potential in Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa: Organization for Social Justice in Ethiopia, 2007); Dessalegn Rahmato, Akalewold Bantirgu, and Yoseph Endeshaw, *CSOs/NGOs in Ethiopia, Partners in Development and Good Governance: A Report Prepared for the Ad Hoc CSO/NGO Task Force* (Addis Ababa: CDRA, 2008).
24. Dessalegn Rahmato [sic] et al., "Roundtable Discussion on 'Food Security and Rural Land Policy,'" *Economic Focus*, 1997: 10.
25. Dessalegn Rahmato [sic] et al., "Roundtable Discussion," 8.
26. For a critique of the ideological nature of the land tenure debate in Ethiopia, see Crewitt Wibke and Korf Benedikt, "Ethiopia: Reforming Land Tenure," *Review of African Political Economy* 116, no. 202–3 (2008).
27. Bahru Zewde, "What Did We Dream? What Did We Achieve? And Where Are We Heading?" *Addis Tribune*, 23 April 2004. This essay was eventually developed into Bahru's book on the student movement in Ethiopia, for which, see earlier in the article.
28. Interestingly, the August 1975 issue of *Challenge* magazine was entitled "Whither Ethiopia." See *Challenge* 15, no. 2 (August 1975).
29. Berhanu Nega, "Ethiopia's Fate after One Generation" (speech made at the Vision 2020 Conference, Addis Ababa, 2003), <http://www.ethiotube.net/video/11154/ESAT—Dr-Berhanu-Negas-famous-Vision-2020-Speech—Ethiopias-fate-after-one-generation> (accessed 20 July 2011).

30. Mesfin Wolde-Mariam, "Whither Ethiopia?" (speech made at the Vision 2020 Conference, Addis Ababa, 2003), <http://www.mesfinwoldemariam.org/docs/VISION2020.pdf> (accessed 20 July 2011); Mesfin Wolde-Mariam, "The Spirit of America: Moral Responsibility to Humanity" (speech made at Clark University, November 2002), http://www.mesfinwoldemariam.org/docs/MWM_Spirit_of_America.pdf (accessed 20 July 2011); Mesfin Wolde-Mariam, "One Cannot Make the Donkey Move by Beating the Load: Breaking the Cycle of Recurrent Famine in Ethiopia" (speech made at a Christian Relief and Development Agency workshop at the Economic Commission for Africa headquarters, July 2003), http://www.mesfinwoldemariam.org/docs/MWM_CRDA_Famine_2003.pdf (accessed 20 July 2011).
31. For examples of this, see the publications on CSOs listed in note 22.
32. CIVICUS is an international alliance of civil society organizations that has been highly influential in a number of Third World and former Soviet bloc countries. Its aim is to promote citizen participation in local level, non-state-based organizations. CIVICUS sees this as an important way forward in order to amplify the voice of citizens on a global stage. See www.civicus.org.
33. See, for example, Dessalegn Rahmato, "The Voluntary Sector in Ethiopia," in *Civil Society at the Crossroads*, ed. Bahru Zewde and Taye Assefa (Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Studies, 2008).
34. See, for example, Klaus Deininger et al., "Tenure Security and Land-Related Investment: Evidence from Ethiopia," *Proceedings of the First International Conference on the Ethiopian Economy*, vol. 2, ed. Alemayehu Seyoum et al. (Addis Ababa: Ethiopian Economics Association, 2004), 19–50; Klaus Deininger et al., "Market and Non-Market Transfers of Land in Ethiopia: Implications for Efficiency, Equity and Non-Farm Development" (World Bank Working Paper no. 2992, World Bank, Washington, DC, 2003).
35. See question 23, in Berhanu Nega, *A Research Report on Land Tenure and Agriculture: Development in Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa: Ethiopian Economics Association/Ethiopian Economic Policy Research Institute, 2002), 113.
36. Question 33, Berhanu Nega, *A Research Report on Land Tenure and Agriculture*, 134.
37. Berhanu Nega, *A Research Report on Land Tenure and Agriculture*, 3.
38. A. Haroon Akram-Lodhi, Cristóbal Kay, and Saturino Borrás, *Land Poverty and Livelihoods in an Era of Globalization: Perspectives from Developing and*

Transition Countries (London: Routledge, 2007), 14–15.

39. Berhanu Nega, *A Research Report on Land Tenure and Agriculture*, 3.
40. Berhanu Nega, *A Research Report on Land Tenure and Agriculture*, xv.
41. Berhanu Nega, *A Research Report on Land Tenure and Agriculture*, 3.
42. Coalition for Unity and Democracy (Kinijit), *Party Manifesto*, 43.
43. Coalition for Unity and Democracy, *Party Manifesto*, 43.
44. Coalition for Unity and Democracy, *Party Manifesto*, 34.
45. Coalition for Unity and Democracy, *Party Manifesto*, 8.
46. Coalition for Unity and Democracy, *Party Manifesto*, 9.
47. Coalition for Unity and Democracy, *Party Manifesto*, 9.
48. See, for instance, Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, *Manufacturing African Studies and Crises* (Dakar: CODESRIA, 1997).
49. See, for instance, V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); Achille Mbembe, "African Modes of Self-Writing," *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (2002): 239–73.
50. In "Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World," Partha Chatterjee is concerned with the connections between intellectual leadership, economic domination, and capitalist hegemony in a Third World context, and he shows that the structure of the postcolonial state is one that accepts a universal standard of progress and as such institutionalizes the thematics of the colonial state, even as it repudiates colonial rule. Here the question becomes, "why is it that non-European colonial countries have no historical alternative but to try to approximate the given attributes of modernity when that very process of approximation means their continued subjection under a world order which only sets their task for them and over which they have no control?" Partha Chatterjee, "Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World," in *The Partha Chatterjee Omnibus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 10.
51. Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).
52. This is discussed in James A. Caporaso and David P. Levine, *Theories of Political Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 34–37.
53. Caporaso and Levine, *Theories of Political Economy*, 37.
54. Caporaso and Levine, *Theories of Political Economy*, 34.
55. Indeed, Issa Shivji makes this argument more clearly in his book, *The*

Silences in the NGO Discourse: The Role and Future of NGOs in Africa
(Nairobi: Fahamu, 2006).

56. Jean-François Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly*, 2nd ed.
(Cambridge, MA: Polity, 2009).
57. Göran Hyden, *No Shortcuts to Progress: African Development Management
in Perspective* (London: Heinemann, 1983).
58. At the time of the 2005 elections, reports from organizations such as
the International Crisis Group and Amnesty International reflected this
rhetoric. See “Ethiopia: Ethnic Federalism and its Discontent,” [http://
www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/africa/horn-of-africa/ethiopia-eritrea/
Ethiopia%20Ethnic%20Federalism%20and%20Its%20Discontents.
pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/africa/horn-of-africa/ethiopia-eritrea/Ethiopia%20Ethnic%20Federalism%20and%20Its%20Discontents.pdf) (accessed 1 December 2015). And from Amnesty, see “Ethiopia: The
15 May 2005 Elections and Human Rights,” [http://www.refworld.org/
pdfid/42ae98270.pdf](http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/42ae98270.pdf) (accessed 1 December 2015). Also see Human Rights
Watch, [https://www.hrw.org/news/2008/10/13/analysis-ethiopias-draft-
civil-society-law](https://www.hrw.org/news/2008/10/13/analysis-ethiopias-draft-civil-society-law).
59. Gebru Tareke, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, xxiii.
60. Kjetil Tronvoll and Sarah Vaughn, *The Culture of Power*, 157.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elleni Centime Zeleke Author please provide a brief bio to appear
here.

